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ABSTRACT

A survey of textbooks used in French elementary schools during the Third Republic illustrates that period's attitudes toward female roles, social class, and religious differences. A sample of 126 public school books and 43 Catholic textbooks reveals that young students were presented the ideal of a woman content to remain inside an orderly household, devoting herself to husband and children. A wife contributed to the social order by keeping her husband happy at home, spending his money wisely, and reminding him, if he was so inclined, that work strikes were harmful to the family. Catholic texts rejected the possibility of divorce which the republic reintroduced in 1884. Both public and Catholic reading texts presented stories about heroes and heroines with whom young people could identify. Girls received messages of social immobility and were warned against trying to improve their status through marrying. Both sexes were taught the desirability of a stable society free from class warfare. The reasons for the emphasis on domestic duties for women lie in the realities of the republic: the rate of industrialization was less rapid than in other countries; working class unrest and militancy existed; and the low birth rate greatly disturbed political leaders. (KC)

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The Education of French Schoolgirls:
Pedagogical Prescriptions and Social
and Economic Realities During the
Third Republic

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"Woman is the guardian of the foyer. Her place is at home, in the house of her parents or husband. . . ; it is for the foyer that she must reserve all her grace and good humor. . . . A woman who does not love her home, who has no taste for household duties. . . cannot remain a virtuous woman for long." Such were the instructions about the domestic mission of women which Madame Henry Gréville offered to French schoolgirls in one of the most widely used textbooks for moral and civic education in girls' public primary schools during the late nineteenth century.¹ Gréville's teaching conformed to the wishes of the Ministry of Public Instruction which ordered that primary schools should prepare boys to become workers and soldiers and initiate girls in the "care of the household and ouvrages de femmes."²

The statements by the Ministry and Gréville indicate that some aspects of primary schooling for girls would differ from that for boys during the Third Republic. It is therefore necessary to modify a generalization about the identity of boys' and girls' elementary schooling which the French historian Antoine Prost makes in his standard Histoire de l'enseignement en France. Prost states that the differences between the education of girls and boys evident on the secondary school level before World War I do not apply to the primary schools. Whereas the state secondary schools for girls sought to familiarize the future ladies of the republican bourgeoisie with domestic virtues and social graces as well as general culture, the primary schools, says Prost, served the "children of the people" and aimed to prepare both sexes for a lifetime of hard work.³ In fact, the pedagogical literature of the Third Republic reveals some noticable dissimilarities in the presentation of male and female roles. This paper will outline these differences, explain what the depiction of the feminine mission reveals about the political and social preoccupations of leaders of the Third Republic, and consider whether this depiction was a realistic view of the life most girls would lead once they left the primary school.

The Third Republic, born in September 1870 as a result of the French loss of the battle of Sedan to Prussia, inherited a school system shaped by earlier regimes, most notably the July Monarchy and Second Empire. During the 1880s reform legislation modified certain aspects of this educational legacy but by no means eliminated some of its most salient features. To an American two traditions in the public school system of France prior to World War II and even beyond are striking: the segregation of the sexes and the separation

of social classes. The educational reforms of 1881-1882 made public primary schooling free and secular and required school attendance of all children aged six to thirteen. These reforms, called the Ferry Laws because of the role of premier and minister of education Jules Ferry in their design and passage, had two general purposes: (1) to insure mass literacy so that citizens would be better able to function in an industrializing society and (2) to help shore up the new republican regime which had replaced the Second Empire of Napoleon III. Republican leaders wanted future generations to be imbued with democratic principles rather than with the authoritarianism fostered by earlier governments. Secularization was an important aspect of the republican design, for at the start of the Third Republic the Catholic Church was strongly identified with monarchical and conservative positions. Secularization led to the removal of religion from the curriculum prescribed for public schools and also eliminated the right to teach in public schools previously enjoyed by the clergy.

In the realm of girls' education the Third Republic sought in three ways to make up for decades of past neglect. Although the great majority of French girls had obtained some schooling prior to the Ferry Laws, female illiteracy rates in 1880 were 25%, as compared to 16% for men.⁴ The Second Empire had mandated in 1850 that separate primary schools for girls be provided by communes with a population of 800 (and in 1867, 500), but many towns had not complied with the regulation and governmental enforcement of it had been lax. Moreover, the Church had been the predominant influence in girls' education in public as well as private schools. Whereas teaching brothers had to present the professional credential of a brevet to obtain such teaching positions, nuns had to show only a letter of obedience from a religious superior.⁵ Thus there was a likelihood of nuns being less intellectually prepared to teach than their male counterparts. When the Second Empire ended, far more nuns than male clerics held posts in the public schools. In 1866 53% of girls in public primary schools had religious teachers; only 19% of public school boys experienced such instruction.⁶ To reduce the Church's influence on women and turn them away from the monarchist politics associated with the post-1815 alliance of Throne and Altar, Ferry and his associates decided to make secularized public schools available for all girls whose parents desired them.⁷ Republicans continued the 1867 regulation calling for separate girls' schools in towns of 500 or more and also stipulated that "mixed" or coeducational schools in smaller towns be staffed by women teachers. Like their Catholic counterparts, most republican educators believed that separating the sexes

was preferable to the American practice of coeducation because they regarded the nature and destiny of females as different from that of males.⁸ The goal of additional public primary schools for girls necessitated a second policy: the training of a new corps of lay female teachers. Thus in 1879 the republican majority had passed a law requiring all departments to provide normal schools for women as well as men. Subsequently 64 new normal schools for women and 6 for men opened, the numerical disparity being clear testimony to the State's prior neglect of girls' education and the Church's predominance.⁹ The third major aspect of educational reform affecting girls was the launching of a state system of secondary schools for girls, an effort which would be far more successful than Victor Duruy's endeavor of the late 1860s which had been severely hampered by Church opposition.¹⁰

The secondary schools and normal schools of course became vitally important for enabling women to enter various professions,¹¹ but they are not the subject of this paper. The pedagogical materials examined here were deliberately chosen from the literature available for primary schools rather than secondary schools because only a small minority of either girls or boys attended the latter during the Third Republic.¹² Both republican and Catholic educators viewed the primary school as a place for instructing the children of "le peuple" who were not presumed to need the same extensive grounding in general culture as the children of the bourgeoisie. Indeed the latter often avoided rubbing shoulders with working class youngsters by attending either private schools catering to a social elite or the special non-free elementary classes attached to public secondary schools for girls and boys. The separation of social classes in the public school system was to be attacked by educational reformers after World War I and, with more success, after World War II.¹³ During the Third Republic the existence of two social tiers within the state school system inevitably affected the way in which republican educators presented the subject of social mobility to girls as well as boys.

Textbooks are a valuable source for determining the way in which sex and class differences were delineated for children. Admittedly textbooks provide clues to only one dimension of the school experience and cannot tell us all we might like to know about a teacher's interactions with students, a school's relationship to a community, or a student's absorption of the school's offerings. But school manuals do tell us what educators believed ought to exist, even if the images did not always mirror reality. From a sample of 126 public school books and 43 Catholic schoolbooks¹⁴ I have selected for discussion some texts which well illustrate not only depictions of female

personalities and roles but also presentations of rural and urban settings, social class differences, and religious differences. Textbooks written especially for girls have also been compared to books intended for boys or for a coeducational audience.

To a late twentieth century reader the French pedagogues' delineation of differences between men and women is striking. The differences begin with personality traits and extend to roles in the family and society. Of course the Third Republic was not unique in its presentation of separate male and female spheres. Students of women's history cannot help but be impressed by the continuities from century to century and country to country in many discourses on differences between men and women. During the Third Republic the seventeenth century Abbé Fénelon, author of a famous treatise on the education of girls, was still a favorite among the first generation of republican educators as well as among Catholics.¹⁵

Madame Gréville's manual of moral instruction for girls, cited earlier, was a particularly important collection of statements about woman's duties. Approved for use in more than ninety per cent of French departments by 1889, the book went through at least twenty-nine editions and was still on most departmental lists of acceptable public school texts in 1909.¹⁶ Gréville presented the ideal of a woman content to stay inside an orderly household and devote herself to husband and children. This woman was constantly busy and prized order and cleanliness. She was also douce, patient, modest, charitable, and reserved. She performed her duties conscientiously and bore life's disappointments with an attitude of "joyous resignation." If a woman was deficient in any of these traits or guilty of behavioral vices, then her faults were more serious than those of men because, intoned the author, the woman must set a moral example for her family. In the relationship with her husband Gréville's woman knew her place and exerted influence on him subtly and gently. If the husband was frequently absent from home, it was his wife's fault. Eleven-to-thirteen-year-old readers were also reminded that article 213 of the Civil Code required women to obey their spouses in return for receiving protection and financial support.

Gréville and other educators expected women to serve society at large as they watched over their own families. A wife could contribute to the maintenance of social order by making her spouse happy at home and thus keeping him away from the cabaret, by spending his earnings wisely and saving as much as possible, and by reminding him, should he be tempted to go on strike, that such action was likely to harm the family and was less desirable for society

than peaceful discussion of differences between employer and employee. The patriotic duties of Gréville's women also included persuading sons and husbands to fight in wartime and learning about the workings of government so that, despite their lack of a vote, they could discuss politics with spouses. However, if disputes arose over political issues, it was the wife's duty to stop the argument by keeping silent, the preservation of family harmony being her responsibility.¹⁷

Most of Gréville's behavioral do's and don'ts also appeared in other republican girls' books and in texts for Catholic schools. Anne-Louise Masson's Manuel de morale et d'instruction civique, a Catholic equivalent of Gréville's text, established the same dichotomy between woman's interior role and man's exterior one. In family life the father represented authority, force, and work; it was natural for him to command and for others to obey without question. By contrast, the mother exhibited faiblesse rather than force and tendresse rather than the imposing voice. More intuitive than the male, the female lacked the ability to reflect and remain calm. Masson's ideal woman was like a clock which gave time only when one needed it. Because women were destined for a hidden interior life, Masson reasoned that the suffragettes' campaign was a ridiculous effort to usurp something which naturally belonged only to men. Men make laws, women make customs, she pontificated.¹⁸ Although a few republican texts of the pre-World War I era had also criticized women agitating for the vote,¹⁹ most had simply remained silent on the subject, as had many Catholic ones. Indeed, the position of avoiding rather than mirroring controversy is what one would expect of textbook writers on most heated issues of the day.

Where Catholic books for girls differed most noticeably from republican offerings was not in the presentation of women's roles but rather on the topics of religion and divorce. Catholic mothers prayed at the start of the day, taught their children to do the same, and accompanied them to church.²⁰ Parental responsibility for sending offspring to Catholic schools was also mentioned in texts.²¹ By contrast, republican books before 1900 treated the prescribed subject of "duties to God" in a vague deistic fashion and, in the wake of the exacerbation of republican anticlericalism following the Dreyfus Affair, often eliminated references to God, religion, and churches altogether.²² As was consistent with Church teaching, Catholic texts rejected the possibility of divorce²³ which the Republic had reintroduced in 1884. The unacceptability of divorce for believing Catholics helps explain why Catholic authors sometimes made prescriptions for female submission more rigid than did

their republican counterparts. While both Catholic and republican writers held up the ideal of men and women cooperating in a happy, orderly household, Catholic girls also learned that if their husbands mistreated them, they must patiently accept suffering because this was the lot of mortals. One Catholic home economics text published in 1938 by a female author even stated that wife-beating was probably caused by a woman's bad housekeeping.²⁴ None of the Catholic texts examined depicted a woman who took her children and fled from a brutal, alcoholic husband, as was the case in Marie Robert Halt's Droit chemin (1902) for public school girls.²⁵

While manuals of moral instruction presented explicit statements about a range of acceptable and forbidden thoughts and deeds for women, reading texts offered stories about heroes and heroines with whom young boys and girls could identify. To illustrate the variety of social settings in which available fictional role models for girls functioned, I have selected six readers. Four were first published before World War I and showed heroines in urban, rural, Catholic, working class, and middle class settings. Two from 1934 and 1940 provide an opportunity to ask whether any significant changes in schools' messages for girls had occurred by the last decade of the Third Republic.

Madame L. C. Desmaisons's Tu seras ouvrière was the one offering for girls in a series of readers designed to orient children to future roles such as artisan, farmer, merchant, citizen, and soldier.²⁶ The heroine of this story, published in 1892, did something which women rarely did in schoolbooks: she not only survived but also prospered in the world of work. Through diligent performance of assigned tasks and help from benevolent employers, Jeanne, a seamstress, rose from rural poverty to urban comfort. Commencing work after leaving the primary school, this motherless girl left a backward area of southwestern France near Poitiers, moved to Paris, eventually became the head of one of the largest dressmaking establishments in the capital, and married an agreeable and honest merchant. Because work in the textile and garment industry was the most important non-agricultural vocational possibility for French girls at the turn of the century,²⁷ Desmaisons's choice of an occupation for her heroine was not unrealistic. But Jeanne's success story was unusual, and her deviation from the norm was pointedly noted in the preface by Jules Simon, a conservative republican politician and onetime minister of education. Spelling out the message of social immobility and modest expectations generally proffered to children of the people, Simon cautioned girls that they should not expect to enjoy Jeanne's success because the odds were "one hundred to one that tu seras ouvrière." He also warned against trying to improve one's

status through marriage because the woman would suffer from ignorance of another class's style of life, never win acceptance from her husband's friends, and run the risk of losing his love as he perceived her unsuitability in his social milieu.²⁸

More typical of republican depictions of female lives was the story of Suzette, Marie Robert Halt's heroine in three volumes which followed a rural girl from age seven to middle age. The daughter of a hardworking and modestly successful farmer, Suzette learned early that the education of girls was intended primarily to prepare them to be good wives and mothers. At the age of seven she already wrote dutifully on her slate that she went to school to learn to run a household later. When Suzette was ten her mother died, an event not unusual in the world of schoolbooks where heroes and heroines were often forced by parental deaths to behave at a young age like serious and responsible adults. Indeed, the most popular textbook of the Third Republic, Bruno's Tour de la France par deux enfants which sold eight million copies, was the remarkable tale of the wanderings and survival of two ingenious male orphans. In Suzette's case the death of her mother plunged her father into despair, and both farm and household suffered from neglect for two years. This crisis made Suzette, the only girl among four siblings, realize that she must act to save the family. With her teacher's aid she assumed responsibility for domestic chores, and at this point readers learned how Suzette cleaned house and drew up a household budget. Suzette's transformation into a ménagère lifted the spirits of all around her and prompted the males to work hard to save the farm from ruin. At the end of the third Suzette volume, by which time Suzette had married a farmer and become the mother of three children, her father paid tribute to all her domestic accomplishments: "Without a woman's providence, intelligence, and busy hands. . . , there is no household which can live and prosper."²⁹

Suzette had a Catholic counterpart in the person of Elisabeth, a creation of Edmée de Kereven. First published in 1909, the three volumes of the Elisabeth series had each sold more than 100,000 copies by 1920.³⁰ Unlike most heroines in republican texts, Elisabeth came from a middle class home, albeit a modest one. Her father was the manager of a paper factory in a small town in Champagne. On a trip to Paris Elisabeth did visit a professional school where adolescent girls learned various trades and office work, but the position of her family made it unlikely that she would ever become one of the working women who made up about 37% of the French "active" population between the 1890s and World War II.³¹ Like Suzette, Elisabeth was plunged into full-

time domesticity at age eleven when her mother died. Elisabeth's homemaking skills comforted her brother and father, especially when the latter had to go through the travail of handling a strike at his factory. The strike accurately mirrored the mounting labor unrest in pre-World War I France, but the author's sympathies were clearly with the employer, not the workers, whom she depicted as troublemakers or misinformed men who gained nothing from their foolish act. The third Elisabeth volume ended with a scene which signified not only Elisabeth's arrival at maturity but also the enduring importance of Catholic values and the re-establishment of social harmony. At age twenty-one Elisabeth married in church (a marriage setting never seen in republican texts), and the factory workers came to wish her well.

A republican girls' text which dramatized the same message that bourgeoisie and working class could coexist harmoniously was Alice Derreims's Jeanne et Madeleine. Adopted in a significant number of departments for classroom use by 1909, this reader was for girls in both the regular primary schools and in the elementary classes of the lycées. The book was set in a suburb of a provincial industrial city on a street where, in the midst of many new and large houses, there was still one worker's small dwelling. As the story opened, twelve-year-old Madeleine was on her way to class at the lycée, followed by her maid whose presence indicated the bourgeoisie's distaste for letting young girls walk alone in the presumably dangerous world outside the family home. Across the street walked twelve-year-old Jeanne, not protected by a maid and in charge of her two younger brothers as they all headed toward the regular primary school. At first sight the two girls disliked each other, Jeanne assuming that Madeleine felt superior to her poor neighbors. But the point of the story was that friendship was possible between the daughters of a factory owner and a factory worker. Madeleine's mother, Madame Renaud, took an interest in Jeanne's family and began paying Jeanne for running daily errands. Madame Renaud's action conformed to the charitable model preferred by the republican bourgeoisie: one helped the poor by giving money not as a handout but in payment for work. Her interest in Jeanne also brought the two girls together. Madeleine learned that workers were clean, honest, and hardworking and also realized that her own privileged position was no excuse for idleness. Ashamed at being unable to care for her own room as Jeanne could, Madeleine learned to clean. In turn, the aesthetic sensibilities of Jeanne were improved. Madeleine gave her a pretty Mediterranean scene to replace ugly pictures on her wall and also lent books so that she could read something other than trashy stories in a popular news-

paper. On a visit with Madeleine to the Renauds' factory, Jeanne listened as Monsieur Renaud explained that because a worker spent the greater part of the day at his job, his wife must provide "an agreeable interior, a foyer where he likes to rest during his leisure." Jeanne knew that his words were meant for her. At the end of the story, as the two girls continued on their separate educational paths, they discussed the importance for France of solidarity among all citizens.³² Thus this book, like Elisabeth, taught that women as well as men must understand the desirability of a stable society free from class warfare and do their bit to maintain it.

During the interwar period certain changes occurred in primary school reading texts. Many pedagogues discarded the reader emphasizing a central figure and instead offered collections of excerpts from great writers of the past and present.³³ Few new readers especially for girls appeared, a change from publishers' and educators' taste for this genre between the 1880s and 1914.³⁴ The romans scolaires which remained on the textbook market tended to tell the joint story of brothers and sisters. However, the disappearance of many readers especially for girls did not mean that all facets of girls' and boys' education had been homogenized. After 1923 there was a multiplication of primary school applied science books intended for just one sex, the reason being that girls' science included home economics while boys' science in rural schools covered agriculture and in urban schools some of the rudiments of various crafts.³⁵ Furthermore, special sections on female roles continued to appear in many readers.³⁶

Two books published near the end of the Third Republic and still in use during the Fourth Republic provide an opportunity for asking whether educators had modified their depiction of women's roles in response to such developments as women's performance of traditionally male jobs during World War I or changes in the job market. Hors du nid (1934) by Charles Ab der Halden, a republican school inspector, told of the travails of Marguerite and Jacques Ligneul after the death of their father. A schoolteacher, the father had been a strong man who had inspired a bit of fear in his children, unlike their loving mother. Marguerite, an older sister, was like a "little mother" in her concern for Jacques. When their widowed mother's earnings as a seamstress proved inadequate, Marguerite went to work in a pastry shop, thereby interrupting her studies at an école primaire supérieure. Working next as a governess, Marguerite rejected a marriage offer a few years later because her mother and brother were financially dependent upon her. In the meantime, Jacques went on from primary to secondary school and became a writer. His coming of age and a new job for the

mother eventually gave Marguerite freedom to marry. In comparison to pre-World War I textbook characters, both children enjoyed expanded educational opportunities which enabled them, after early hardships, to lead more comfortable lives than those of typical farmers or workers. But Ab der Halden's tale required more self sacrifice from the older sister than from the younger brother.³⁷ André, Jacqueline, Deux Enfants de France (1940), a story by two clerics, focused on a comfortable middle class family of the sort more typical of Catholic than republican texts. Although this brother and sister enjoyed family outings together, the plot gave André the more exciting life. It was he who went to camp and won a school prize enabling him to go on a trip to the shrine at Lourdes. At the end of the story André contemplated his secondary studies and announced that he wanted a career in one of the French colonies. In contrast, Jacqueline looked ahead to a home economics course after primary school, and she promised her parents that because André wanted to go far away, she would always stay close to home.³⁸

Clearly the authors of the two aforementioned texts regarded the career planning of boys as more important than that of girls. Their presentation of differing prospects for the adult lives of brothers and sisters was by no means exceptional. At the end of the Third Republic, as at the beginning, educators made the "interior" world of home and family more important for girls than the "exterior" world of work. But this does not mean that woman's work outside the home was completely ignored. Recognition of economic necessity led many, if not all pedagogues to develop lessons about female employment. Most textbook writers, republican and Catholic, discussed the issue of women's work by using part or all of the following four-part argument. (1) For young girls and single women from the laboring classes paid employment outside the home or work on the family farm were the norm. Young girls were advised to learn a trade in order to contribute to their own support, help their parents, and have a livelihood to fall back on in the event that they remained unmarried or, once married, suddenly had to earn money due to such unforeseen circumstances as their husbands' illness or death.³⁹ (2) For most married women, however, the ideal was devotion to home and family. Work outside the home was labeled undesirable because it led to child neglect, bad housekeeping, the flight of husbands to the cabaret, and fatigue for women trying to combine outside employment with housework.⁴⁰ Because work outside the home presumably affected families so adversely, women were counselled that thrift might well produce as much financial advantage for the family as a job requiring extra expenses for cloth-

ing and meals.⁴¹ (3) Yet many pedagogues had to concede that if a husband's wages were low, there was no alternative to a wife's earning money. In that case it was most desirable for her to work at home, perhaps as a laundress or seamstress.⁴² In light of the fact that fully 36% of women listed as "active" in the 1906 census worked at home,⁴³ the primary school's concern with teaching sewing and the rudiments of home economics had a practical vocational thrust. Some writers admitted, though, that home work was poorly paid and so might be inadequate for a family's needs.⁴⁴ (4) Thus in extreme cases there might be no alternative to a woman's working outside the home. The discussion of this possibility became more common during the later decades of the Third Republic as changes occurred in women's patterns of employment. Although there was little change in the percentage of French women at work during the first half of the twentieth century, jobs in home and sweatshop gave way to positions in stores and offices.⁴⁵ Typically educators taught that wives working outside the home must learn to combine jobs with a still efficient performance of household chores.⁴⁶

The presentation of cases where married women worked was a textbook concession to reality. Between 1900 and 1950 women made up roughly 37% of the "active" population.⁴⁷ Furthermore, a higher percentage of married women worked in France than in any other major western nation. In 1931 19.4% of French married women worked in nonagricultural jobs, usually outside the home, as compared to 9.9% of their British and 9.4% of their American counterparts.⁴⁸ If the labor of farm wives is included, then 44.3% of French married women worked in 1931. Yet textbooks did not depict women engaged in a wide range of occupations apart from homemaking. In schoolbooks, as in real life, women's work was usually of low status. Working women in school texts were most often fermières, dressmakers, laundresses, shopkeepers, shop clerks, and servants.⁴⁹ The most common profession for a well educated woman was that of schoolteacher, the first occupation for women which enabled lower class girls to rise above humble family origins.

The textbook message that the main reward most women reaped from working was provision for basic individual and family needs and not personal satisfaction or a rise in social status must be viewed as simply one aspect of the lesson for both sexes that most children should expect to lead lives no different from those of their parents. Boys were regularly advised to become diligent artisans, factory workers, or farmers and were often no more encouraged to aspire to upward social mobility than girls.⁵⁰ Entering a profession required a post-elementary education that most French children would not have until after

World War II. The number of écoles primaires supérieures, which provided working class and lower middle class children with a first step upward on the ladder of social mobility, was limited. Secondary schools, the avenue to prestigious professions, were not free until the 1930s, and only a small number of scholarships was available. Thus financial considerations plus the difficulty and risk associated with transferring from the primary to the secondary part of the school system were major obstacles for poor but bright boys and girls.⁵¹ Republican schoolbooks were no more likely to arouse expectations of social mobility than Catholic ones.

Why did French pedagogues emphasize modest ambitions and call on women to perform domestic duties as a patriotic contribution to social stability? Three answers may be suggested. First, the lack of American-style Horatio Alger models for males and females was in keeping with both French cultural traditions and economic realities. Making money was not viewed as an end in itself by the French upper classes or the intellectual elite. Nor were there unlimited opportunities for quickly acquiring large sums of money in a country whose rate of industrialization was less rapid than that of England, Germany, or the United States. For good reason the Third Republic has been dubbed a relatively static or stalemated society.⁵² Although France changed more slowly than its neighbors, it did of course change. From the nineteenth century onward France was subject to the social stresses accompanying industrialization and urbanization. The reactions of government leaders to these stresses supply a second reason for the image of a static society prevalent in much pedagogical literature. The first year of the Third Republic coincided not only with the pain of military defeat but also with the cataclysm of the Paris Commune. In subsequent decades the socialist Left was to become an important element in political life, managing in the last election before World War I to win one sixth of the vote. Communists entered the political arena after the socialist party split in late 1920. Republican leaders responded to workers' militancy and leftist politics by preaching the value of social stability and trying to persuade younger generations that the republic, with its provision of universal manhood suffrage, was as just a regime as there could be. Calling upon women to keep men happy at home by providing clean and attractive surroundings and good meals was, despite its triteness, one aspect of efforts to dampen working class unrest. Finally, the low French birthrate--lower than that of any other major western nation from the early nineteenth century to World War I⁵³--haunted leaders of all political persuasions and colored thinking about female roles. Republican politicians worried that the low birthrate would not

only place France at a disadvantage in a military confrontation with more populous Germany but also retard economic growth because of an inadequate pool of workers. The tragic loss of French lives in World War I exacerbated fears of depopulation, and the school mirrored these fears. Injunctions to found large families, an occasional ingredient in prewar schoolbooks,⁵⁴ became more common in both republican and Catholic texts after 1919.⁵⁵ In 1923 the subject of puériculture, the care of infants, was also added to the prescribed primary school curriculum for girls. Thus the domestic emphasis in the school's offerings for girls was an integral part of the response of French leaders to social crises and fears of depopulation.

How did French girls react to the pedagogical prescriptions for domesticity? Did they shun jobs or careers in favor of the care and feeding of large families? Apparently most schoolgirls did not embrace home economics as their favorite subject. A survey of more than 15,000 public primary schoolgirls in the department of the Nord in 1899 revealed that only 4% ranked sewing or home economics first; girls rated 6 other subjects more highly and gave history the largest number of votes.⁵⁶ The continuation of the low French birthrate during the interwar period demonstrates that as long as governmental financial incentives for large families were limited, men and women were not noticeably swayed by natalist pronouncements from schools or politicians.

Nor did all women overlook the career opportunities made possible by the expansion of women's education. Historians of education often note the paradox that while governments may intend to use the school as an instrument of social control, schooling itself may make individuals discontent with social constraints and eager to use new skills to change and improve themselves, if not society.⁵⁷ The primary school of the Third Republic was never intended to prepare most children for anything other than lives as farmers, workers, or housewives. But the certificat d'études primaires, obtained by the better students who could pass an examination testing largely memorization skills, was a vehicle for at least limited upward social mobility. The importance of the primary school certificate during the Third Republic may be compared to that of an American high school diploma before World War II. For girls, the certificate could lead to admission to a normal school or to a low level government job such as a post office position. During the Third Republic girls increasingly took advantage of the chance to obtain this certificate, although a somewhat lower percentage of girls than boys tried the examination for the certificate and public school girls were a bit more likely to take the exam than those from Catholic schools. In 1877 girls obtained 29% of the primary school certificates, in

1882 42%, in 1907 46%, and in 1934 48.4%.⁵⁸ In the meantime, the percentage of nonfarm working women who were in government service and liberal professions rose from 7% in 1901 to 14% in 1936.⁵⁹

Did gaining the school certificate or participating in the work force at a high rate mean that many French women consciously rejected the domestic images of the ideal woman purveyed by the school, or, for that matter, by other important institutions such as the Church? Precise measurements of personal values are difficult to obtain, but there is evidence of a long persistence of gaps between idealized notions of what women should be and the reality of their everyday work lives. At the end of the Third Republic most educators who addressed the topic of women's work recommended it for single women but disapproved of it for the married except in cases of dire economic necessity. These views persisted during the Fourth Republic when, as in the United States during the 1950s, both secular and Catholic molders of French opinion gave increased emphasis to the ideal of "la femme au foyer."⁶⁰ The collaborationist Vichy Regime's glorification of woman's family role was carried on by the post-war Fourth Republic. The family allowance system, a creation of the late Third Republic and Vichy, was expanded after World War II to encourage the French to have larger families cared for by a ménagère devoted to her home. During the 1950s the percentage of women in the active population dropped below all previous twentieth century levels, although 32.7% of all married women still worked in the agricultural and nonagricultural sectors of the economy.⁶¹ In 1958 a group of sociologists conducted interviews in the Paris region to sample opinion on the contemporary role of women. Equal numbers of working class, middle class, and upper class married couples were interviewed. The opinion of all groups on the general question "should women work?" was divided: 41.6% said yes and 41.3% said no. Women were much more favorable to jobs for women than were men, with 56.7% of women answering the question affirmatively, as compared to only 26.7% of men. Of the 56.1% of men who expressed hostility to jobs for women, upper class men were the least hostile (48%), middle class men more hostile (55%), and working class men, most likely to have wives in the work force, the most hostile (65%). Yet when the interviewers then specifically asked whether single women or childless married women should work, 97.5% of both sexes approved of work for the single and 74.7% for married women without children. The overwhelming majority (87.5%) disapproved of work for women with pre-school age children, and a substantial majority (68%) of work by those with children in school.⁶² The poll results indicate that these adults, most of whom had been schooled during

the Third Republic, attached comparatively little importance to women's employment. Although significantly more women than men responded affirmatively to the general question of whether women should work, women agreed with men that women should work only if they lacked a better option, namely a sufficiently prosperous husband and children. Such beliefs were hardly likely to foster positive attitudes towards women's professional activities.

During the 1970s French feminists would renew efforts to eliminate the gap between idealized images of women and the reality of everyday life. In 1974 when Françoise Giroud assumed the new post of undersecretary of state for women, one of her first concerns was ordering a study of the depiction of women in the textbooks of the Fifth Republic. The findings of one preliminary report submitted to her office stressed the continuation of the depiction of women in domestic roles, low status jobs, and halcyon rural settings,⁶³ a presentation which French educational researchers found unrealistic for the 1970s but which might have served equally well to describe the portrayal of women in both republican and Catholic schoolbooks two, three, four, or five generations earlier.

Footnotes

1. Alice Durand-Gréville [Mme. Henry Gréville], L'Instruction morale et civique des jeunes filles (Paris, 1882), pp. 152-153.
2. Ministère de l'instruction publique, Règlements organiques de l'enseignement primaire (Paris, 1887), p. 344.
3. Antoine Prost, Histoire de l'enseignement en France, 1800-1967 (Paris, 1968), p. 261.
4. "L'Enseignement en France," Sondages (Eté, 1950): 8.
5. For background on the role of religion and religious personnel in public schools see Pierre Zind, L'Enseignement religieux dans l'instruction primaire publique en France de 1850 à 1873 (Lyon, 1973).
6. Prost, Enseignement, p. 218.
7. Ibid., pp. 268-269.
8. Charles Drouard, Les Ecoles de filles, féminisme et éducation, 2d ed. (Paris, 1907), pp. vii, 226.
9. Maurice Gontard, L'Oeuvre scolaire de la troisième république; L'Enseignement en France de 1876 à 1914 (Toulouse, 1967), p. 88. Many departments had maintained écoles normales for males since the July Monarchy.
10. Sandra A. Hovarth, "Victor Duruy and the Controversy over Secondary Education for Girls," French Historical Studies 9 (1975): 83-104.
11. Although the republican founders of lycées for girls did not intend them to prepare young women for professions or even university entrance, the clientele of the girls' lycées developed precisely these ambitions and in 1924 the lycée curriculum for girls became identical to that for boys. For this evolution see Françoise Mayeur, L'Enseignement secondaire des jeunes filles sous la troisième république (Paris, 1977).
12. In 1913 2,474,000 boys and 2,125,000 girls attended public primary schools; 69,200 boys and 19,700 girls attended public lycées and collèges. In addition, more than 70,000 boys and more than 50,000 girls also attended the less prestigious post-primary cours complémentaires and écoles primaires supérieures. See Prost, Enseignement, pp. 218, 346.
13. In 1906 86,199 pupils attended the special elementary classes attached to public and private schools. (Statistique de l'enseignement primaire [Paris, 1909], p. cv.) On the efforts to democratize French public education see John E. Talbott, The Politics of Educational Reform in France, 1918-1940 (Princeton, 1969) and W. D. Halls, Society, Schools and Progress in France (Oxford, 1965).

14. Significant public school books have been identified from lists collected by the Ministry of Public Instruction which identify how many departments adopted various titles. See Ministère de l'instruction publique, Livres scolaires en usage dans les écoles primaires publiques (Paris, 1889) and Archives Nationales F¹⁷ 11656, the latter indicating the choices of 24 departments as of 1909. Reviews in educational journals and the textbook collection of the Institut pédagogique national were used to identify post-1909 public school titles and Catholic titles. For Catholic titles Abbés Labelle, Porteboeuf, Quilici et un professeur d'histoire, Le Livre scolaire catholique français (Paris, 1924) and the Annuaire officiel de l'enseignement libre catholique (Bordeaux, 1935) were also useful. For the method of book selection by public school teachers at the cantonal level see P.-H. Gay and O. Montreux, eds., French Elementary Schools, Official Courses of Study (New York, 1926), p. 16.
15. The Bibliothèque Nationale Catalogue lists 29 editions of François de Fénelon, De l'éducation des filles published between 1870 and 1910; 10 of these editions were a version edited for republican educators by Charles Defodon.
16. Ministère, Livres, p. 3; AN F¹⁷ 11656.
17. Gréville, Instruction, pp. 129-188.
18. Anne -Louise Masson, Manuel de morale et d'instruction civique, 3rd ed. (Paris, 1922), pp. 86, 112-116, 183. The first edition appeared in 1909.
19. Clarisse Juranville, Manuel d'éducation morale et d'instruction civique à l'usage des jeunes filles, 6th ed. (Paris, 1899), pp. 20, 255; Ernestine Wirth, La future ménagère, 10th ed. (Paris, 1904), pp. 7-8; Charlotte Sage, L'Enseignement ménager (Paris, 1901), p. 48.
20. Stella, Lectures pour les jeunes filles (Tours, 1911), pp. 2, 120, Marie Thiéry Lisette (Paris, 1910), pp. 3-4.
21. Société départementale d'industrie d'Ille-et-Vilaine, Leçons d'agriculture élémentaire et d'économie domestique (Rennes, 1896, 1924), p. 10; Religieuses de la Providence, Notions d'économie domestique à l'école primaire et dans les pensionnats de jeunes filles (Ploermel, 1900), p. 20.
22. Aime Dupuy, "Les Livres de lecture de G. Bruno," Revue d'histoire économique et sociale 31 (1953): 137, 147. The 1923 program for elementary schools eliminated "duties to God" from the morale curriculum.
23. Abbé E. Bourceau and R. Fabry, Lectures littéraires expliquées avec l'enseignement moral et civique (Paris, 1933), p. 369.
24. Ernestine Wirth, Livre de lecture des jeunes filles chrétiennes (Paris, 1877, 1910), p. 55; Fleury Marduel, La Morale de la ménagère (Paris, 1938), p. 20.

25. Marie Vieu [Marie Robert Halt], Le droit chemin (Paris, 1902).
26. Armand Colin was the publisher.
27. In 1896 40% of the female nonagricultural work force was employed in the textile and garment industries. See Joan Scott and Louise Tilly, "Women's Work and the Family in Nineteenth Century Europe," Comparative Studies in Society and History 17 (1975): 39; Catherine Bodard Silver, "France," in Women, Roles and Status in Eight Countries, ed. Janet Zollinger Giele and Audrey Chapman Smock (New York, 1977), p. 273.
28. Jules Simon, "Preface" to L. C. Desmaisons, Tu seras Ouvrière (Paris, 1892), pp. iii-iv.
29. Halt, L'Enfance de Suzette, 17th ed. (Paris, 1907), p. 8; Suzette (Paris, 1889); Le Ménage de Mme. Sylvain (Paris, 1895), pp. 311-312.
30. E. de Kereven, Le premier livre d'Elisabeth, 2d ed. (Lyon, 1910); La petite Elisabeth (Lyon, 1910); Elisabeth, 2d ed. (Lyon, 1910). Sales figures from Kereven, La Famille Aubert (Lyon and Paris, 1920), p. ii.
31. Henri Nolleau, "Les Femmes dans la population active de 1856 a 1954," Economie et Politique (October^s, 1960): 10.
32. Alice Dereims, Jeanne et Madeleine (Paris, 1902), pp. 131, 347.
33. Maurice Sursonne, "La lecture et les manuels à l'école primaire," Revue pédagogique 83 (December, 1923): 404.
34. Ministère, Livres; AN F¹⁷ 11656. The 1889 list of books for public primary schools contained 36 titles especially for girls; at least 88 girls' titles were on the 1909 lists.
35. For evidence of the use of separate science books for boys and girls as of the early 1970s, see Préfecture de Paris, Direction de l'Enseignement, Liste des ouvrages classiques qui peuvent être fournis gratuitement aux frais de la ville de Paris dans les écoles primaires, collèges d'enseignement general, commercial et industriel (Paris, 1971).
36. Louis-Eugène Rogie, M. Bornecque, and Mme. Levesque, Nouvelles lectures professionnelles (Paris, 1928), pp. 157-184; René Bazin and P. Dufrenne, Lectures françaises, Il était quatre petits enfants, cours élémentaire et moyen (Tours, 1923, 1942), pp. 6, 16; cours moyen et supérieur (Tours, 1942), pp. 91, 147.
37. Charles Ab der Halden, Hors du nid (Paris, 1934, 1950). By 1950 175,000 copies of the book had been published.
38. Msgr. Marcel Hamayon and Abbé A. Bragade, André, Jacqueline, Deux Enfants de France (Paris, 1940, 1951). The 1940 edition has an introduction dated March 1940, an indication of the book's pre-Vichy origins.

39. Gréville, Instruction, pp. 163-164; Stella, Lectures, pp. 31-32.
40. Republican texts: Jules Payot, La Morale à l'école, 3d ed. (Paris, 1908), p. 191; Aimé Souché, Le deuxième livre de morale de la jeune française (Paris, 1926), pp. 5-6. Catholic: Thiéry, Lisette, p. 32; Mlle. Darcey, Petit cours d'enseignement ménager, 8th ed. (Lyon, 1935), pp. 7-8.
41. Mme. Foulon-Lefranc and G. Laurent, L'Ecole du bonheur (Paris, 1938), p. 9.
42. Ernest Lavissee [Laloi], La première année d'instruction civique (Paris, 1880), p. 89; Masson, Manuel, p. 115.
43. Michelle Perrot, "Machine à coudre et travail à domicile," Mouvement social 105 (November, 1978): 164.
44. Emile Devinat, Livre de lecture et de morale, 17th ed. (Paris, n.d.), p. 50; Ab der Halden, Hors du nid, p. 60.
45. Nollet, "Les Femmes," pp. 2-21.
46. Souché, Le deuxième livre, pp. 13, 103-106; Foulon-Lefranc and Laurent, Ecole, p. 10.
47. Computed from figures in P. Bairoch, ed., La Population active et sa structure (Brussels, 1968), p. 167.
48. Jean Daric, L'Activité professionnelle des femmes en France (Paris, 1947), p. 80.
49. For example, Félix Broutet and Marguerite Reynier depicted 22 male and 5 female occupations in their Livre des métiers, 5th ed. (Paris, 1938). The female occupations were seamstress, grocery store owner, milkmaid-milkseller, laundress, and ironer.
50. A. Mézières, Education morale et instruction civique (Paris, 1883), pp. 60, 154; Armand Ligny, En route pour la vie, 7th ed. (Paris, 1919), p. 162; Chanoine C. Grill and P. Le Floch, L'Enseignement scientifique par l'observation et l'expérience, Garçons (Paris, 1937), p. 393.
51. For enrollments in cours complémentaires, écoles primaires supérieures, lycées, and collèges, see Prost, Enseignement, p. 346. A primary school pupil wishing to transfer to a secondary school had to do so at age 11 to start Latin with others of his age, but by so doing he left the primary school before preparing for the certificat d'études primaires and thus, if he later dropped out of school or did not obtain a baccalauréat, ran the risk of having no degree.
52. Stanley Hoffman, "Paradoxes of the French Political Community," in In Search of France, ed. Hoffmann and Others (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), p. 3; Georges Dupeux, French Society 1789-1790, trans. Peter Wait (London and New York, 1976), Chapters 4, 5.
53. Dupeux, French Society, pp. 1-4.

54. Durand-Gréville, Instruction, pp. 36-37; Stella, Lectures, p. 99.
55. Republican texts: Félicien Challaye and Marguerite Reynier, Cours de morale, 8th ed. (Paris, 1939), p. 140; Souché, Le deuxième livre, p. 21. Catholic texts: Bourceau and Fabry, Lectures, pp. 93, 350; Marduel, Morale, p. 17.
56. G. Lefèvre, "Une enquête pédagogique dans les cours moyens des écoles primaires du Nord," Revue pédagogique 36 (January, 1900): 8.
57. Prost, Enseignement, pp. 10-12, 330.
58. Statistique de l'enseignement primaire, pp. 266-269; R. Rivet, "L'enseignement primaire en France depuis la guerre," Bulletin de la Statistique générale de la France 25 (1936): 327; Annuaire statistique de la ville de Paris (Paris, 1906), pp. 396-397, (1920), p. 355. Rivet's report indicates that in 1934 only 50% of primary school pupils nearing the end of their studies tried for the certificate and only 40% obtained it.
59. Daric, Activité professionnelle, p. 31.
60. Unlike the 1940 edition, the 1951 version of Hamayon and Bragade, André, Jacqueline, has a chapter on the domestic mission of women (pp. 242-245). For public school texts see Souché, Les nouvelles leçons de morale au cours moyen (Paris, 1947), pp. 38-43, 218-222; M. Ballot and R. Aveille, Education morale et civique (Paris, 1952), p. 86.
61. Bairoch, Population, pp. 167, 169.
62. Marie-José Chombart de Lauwe, Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe, and Others, La Femme dans la société, Son image dans différents milieux sociaux (Paris, 1963), pp. 212-213.
63. Institut national pour la documentation et recherche pédagogiques, "Images de la femme dans les manuels scolaires," Bibliographie de France 19, part 2 (May 7, 1975): 766-787. For similar findings see Délégation régionale à la condition féminine, L'Image de la Femme dans les manuels scolaire et les livres d'enfants (Paris, 1979), issued by the Préfecture de la Région Ile de France.